

Message Text

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ACTION H-03

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9541

INFO CINCPAC HONOLULU HI PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 928

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OREP, MILI, EAID

SUBJECT: CODEL MONTGOMERY-FOLLOW UP: EOD

SUMMARY: CHAIRMAN MONTGOMERY MADE A SPECIFIC OFFER OF ASSISTANCE TO THE LAO IN EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE DISPOSAL (EOD) DURING THE CODEL'S VISIT TO VIENTIANE. THE EMBASSY SUGGESTS THAT AN AIDE MEMOIRE BE GIVEN TO THE LAO PROPOSING THAT AN EXPERT TEAM BE SENT TO LAOS TO LOOK INTO THE PROBLEM. THE CHANCES OF THE OFFER BEING ACCEPTED ARE SLIM. NEVERTHELESS, IT WOULD BE A POSITIVE GESTURE IN FULFILLMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN'S OFFER, AND IT WOULD PLACE THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY SUBSEQUENT INACTION ON THE LAO.

ACTION REQUESTED: INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO FOLLOW UP ON CHAIRMAN MONTGOMERY'S OFFER OF EOD ASSISTANCE. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING HIS CODEL'S VISIT TO VIENTIANE AUGUST 25 AND 26, CHAIRMAN G.V. MONTGOMERY MADE A SPECIFIC OFFER TO THE
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LAO OF ASSISTANCE IN FINDING AND REMOVING UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE WHICH THE LAO STATED COULD BE FOUND ALL OVER THEIR COUNTRY.

2. THE LAO TOLD THE CODEL THAT MANY AREAS OF LAOS COULD NOT BE INHABITED, FARMED, OR EXPLOITED BECAUSE OF THE DANGER OF UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE. THEY SAID THAT THE LPDR

DID NOT NEED ANY HEOP IN FINDING BOMBS AND SHELLS, BUT THEY DID WANT THE "MOST MODERN EQUIPMENT" TO EXPLODE OR DISARM THEM.

3. IN FOLLOWING UP ON THIS OFFER, WE HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM THAT THE LAO HAVE NO CONCEPT OF THE DIFFICULTIES INVOLVED IN EOD AND OF THE HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED TECHNIQUES WHICH MUST BE USED. THEY SEEM TO THINK THAT THERE ARE MODERN, ALMOST MAGIC MACHINES WHICH CAN FIND AND HARMLESSLY EXPLODE BOMBS IN THE GROUND.

4. THE FIRST PROBLEM IS THUS TO POINT OUT TO THE LAO THAT WHEREAS THERE MAY BE EQUIPMENT WHICH CAN EXPLODE, FOR EXAMPLE, PRESSURE-SENSITIVE MINES, THIS EQUIPMENT WOULD BE COMPLETELY USELESS AGAINST OTHER TYPES OF WEAPONS. THEY WOULD ALSO HAVE TO BE TOLD THAT EVEN THOUGH THEY MAY BE ABLE TO FIND BURIED UNEXPLODED ORDNANCE, THEY WOULD HAVE TO HAVE OUTSIDE HELP IN IDENTIFYING IT AND DISARMING IT.

5. AS AN INITIAL STEP, THEREFORE, IN FOLLOWING UP ON CHAIRMAN MONTGOMERY'S OFFER, IT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO SEND AN AIDE MEMOIRE ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES TO THE LAO, OFFERING ASSISTANCE AND POINTED OUT THAT AS AN INITIAL STEP, AN EXPERT EOD TEAM WOULD HAVE TO BE SENT TO LAOS TO CONFER WITH THEM AND DISCUSS THE CONFIDENTIAL

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NECESSARY PROCEDURES. THE AIDE MEMOIRE COULD BE ACCOMPANIED BY ORAL ELABORATION AND EXPLANATION. A SUGGESTED TEXT FOLLOWS:

A. "DURING THE AUGUST 25 AND 26 VISIT TO VIENTIANE OF THE CONGRESSIONAL DELEGATION HEADED BY CONGRESSMAN G.V. MONTGOMERY, MR. MONTGOMERY MADE AN OFFER OF ASSISTANCE TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC IN THE DISPOSAL OF EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE WHICH CAN BE FOUND IN CERTAIN PARTS OF THE LAO COUNTRYSIDE AS A RESULT OF THE HOSTILITIES WHICH ENDED IN 1975.

B. "THE FIRST STEP IN DISPOSING OF THIS ORDNANCE IS TO FIND IT. IT IS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT THE LAO AUTHORITIES NEED NO ASSISTANCE IN THIS RESPECT. HOWEVER, ONCE THE ORDNANCE IS FOUND, IT MUST BE IDENTIFIED, THE PROPER METHOD OF DISPOSAL MUST BE DETERMINED, AND THE ORDNANCE THEN DISARMED AND REMOVED OR EXPLODED. THERE IS NO ONE TECHNIQUE OR TYPE OF EQUIPMENT WHICH CAN DO THIS FOR ALL TYPES OF ORDNANCE.

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AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 VIENTIANE 928

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

C. "SINCE SELECTING THE PROPER TECHNIQUES AND EQUIPMENT REQUIRES CONSIDERABLE TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE, THE EMBASSY WOULD LIKE TO SUGGEST TO THE FOREIGN MINISTRY THAT THE LAO GOVERNMENT INVITE A TEAM OF AMERICAN EXPERTS TO COME TO LAOS TO LOOK INTO THE EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE PROBLEM. SUCH A TEAM WOULD HAVE TO BE ABLE TO TRAVEL TO THE VARIOUS PARTS OF THE COUNTRY WHERE THE ORDNANCE IS FOUND, THEY WOULD HAVE TO BE ABLE TO SPEND A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT OF TIME IN THE FIELD, AND THEY WOULD HAVE TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY OF MAKING CAREFUL EXPLORATIONS AND STUDIES.

D. "ONCE SUCH A PRELIMINARY VISIT AND STUDY HAD BEEN MADE, THE AMERICAN TEAM WOULD BE ABLE TO MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS AS TO WHAT FURTHER ACTIONS WOULD HAVE TO BE TAKEN AND AS TO WHAT FURTHER ASSISTANCE MIGHT BE PROVIDED.

E. "THE EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S REACTION TO THIS SUGGESTED METHOD OF IMPLEMENTING CONGRESSMAN MONTGOMERY'S OFFER OF ASSISTANCE."

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6. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THERE IS ONLY A SLIGHT

CHANCE THAT THE LAO GOVERNMENT WOULD ACCEPT THIS OFFER. THEY HAVE NEVER SHOWN ANY READINESS IN RECENT YEARS TO PERMIT FOREIGN PERSONNEL, LET ALONE FOREIGN MILITARY PERSONNEL TO TRAVEL FREELY IN REMOTE PARTS OF THE COUNTRY. THEY WOULD NOT, FOR EXAMPLE, PERMIT A SWEDISH ARMY ENGINEERING OFFICER TO VISIT BRIDGE SITES ALONG ROUTE 9 IN SOUTHERN LAOS EARLIER THIS YEAR IN CONNECTION WITH A SWEDISH AID PROJECT. NEVERTHELESS, OUR MAKING THE OFFER WOULD FULFILL THE COMMITMENT BY CONGRESSMAN MONTGOMERY AND IT WOULD PLACE THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANY SUBSEQUENT INACTION ON THE EOD ISSUE FIRMLY ON THE LAO.

7. SHOULD THE LAO SURPRISE US AND ACCEPT THE OFFER, THE VISIT COULD TAKE PLACE AND THE LAO COULD BE TOLD JUST WHAT SORT OF AN EOD PROGRAM WOULD BE REQUIRED. AGAIN, WE THINK IT VERY UNLIKELY THAT THE LAO WOULD BE WILLING TO ADMIT THE FOREIGN EXPERTS AND TECHNICIANS WHICH WOULD BE NEEDED TO CARRY OUT AN EFFECTIVE EOD PROGRAM IN LAOS.

8. ACTION REQUESTED: THAT THE DEPARTMENT PROVIDE THE EMBASSY WITH APPROPRIATE INSTRUCTIONS FOR FOLLOWING UP CONGRESSMAN MONTGOMERY'S OFFER OF EOD ASSISTANCE TO THE LAO.
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